

# **PRIVATE SECTOR VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL STATEHOLDER GROUP**

11/21/2005 – Tukwila, WA

## ***VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROVIDERS***

### **Attendees**

Michael Barron, IAM Crest  
Cathy Cottingham, People Systems, Inc.  
Sheryl Cousineau, Sheryl's Rehab Service  
Fred Cutler, Cutler Counseling, LLC  
Kari D'Aboy, Career Horizon  
Cory Turner, Vocational Connections  
Jenipher Gaffney, Gaffney Counseling & Consultants  
Nancy Ziegler, Broadspire  
Jill Rosenthal, Rehabilitation and Evaluation Services  
Bradley Ehrlich, Career Opportunity Group

### **Absent**

Terry McCall, McCall Voc Counseling Service  
Patti Kacz, Intracorp  
April Poier, Grant and Associates

## ***DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIES***

### **Attendees**

Don Lane  
Rheo Aieta  
Rich Wilson  
Terry Thomas  
Keith Klinger  
Donna Spencer

### **Absent**

Sigrid Alejandro

### **Audience Members**

Vicki Kennedy, Deputy Assistant Director (Acting), Dept. of Labor & Industries

Patrick Woods, Assistant Director, Specialty Compliance, Dept. of Labor & Industries

Gail Griswold, Self-Insurance, Dept. of Labor & Industries

Julie Maxwell, Rainier Case Management

Kathryn Hudson, Rainier Case Management

### **Welcome & Review Minutes – Rheo Aieta**

Rheo introduced Keith Klinger, Policy and Education Coordinator, a newly created position within the Return to Work Services Program. Other VTSG committee members and audience members introduced themselves. The minutes from the May 16, 2005 VTSG meeting were reviewed. No suggestions were made for any changes to those minutes.

### **Announcements – Rheo Aieta & Rich Wilson**

Rheo made the following announcements:

- VTSG members were informed that alternative delegates were not allowed if a VTSG member could not attend meetings. A request for an exception had been made for any IARP board members to “pinch-hit” for another member. After careful consideration the RTW Services Program decided not to allow exceptions.
  - Anyone is always welcome to attend VTSG meetings as an audience member
  - The department desires commitment and consistency from VTSG members
  - Having the possibility of new people at the table for each meeting can detract from our goal
  - The department is responsible for the VTSG meeting and insuring that the meetings have value and use state resources appropriately.
- Approximately 150 VRCs had registered for the 2005 Fall Conference as of 11/21/05. Six and ½ CEUs were requested, but only six CEUs were approved because CRCC and CDMSC did not include the time for the opening and closing comments.
- Recruitment efforts, including local and national advertising, the Washington IARP conference, the CARRP conference, and L&I’s open house during the month of October generated a pool of over 20 VRCs who have submitted resumes and/or applications to the Department. Interviews for VSC positions are anticipated to begin in December.

- The percentage of VRC findings within the total number of VDRO disputes dropped to 17% during the third quarter 2005 (down from 29.5% in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter and 27% in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter).

Rich made the following announcements:

- A service request has been submitted to enable vocational providers to access the Claim and Account Center (CAC). This access will include specific claim information and imaged documents pertaining to specific claims. It is expected that the programming will be completed in mid-2006.
- The Department of Labor and Industries will not take a general increase in the premium rate employers and workers pay for workers' compensation insurance. While there is no general increase, the premium rate will rise in the Accident Fund, which only employers pay into. That fund provides money for pensions and wage-replacement benefits for workers who are injured so seriously they cannot work. The increase in that fund will be offset by decreases in the Medical Aid and Supplemental Pension funds, which both workers and employers contribute to.

Donna made the following announcement:

- The issue of increasing consistency on the forms website is being explored. The physician's estimate of physical capacities and the physical demands JA do not use the same key. Donna is asking for the groups input on what standards they would recommend for a physical demands key.

### **Vocational Improvement Initiative – Rich Wilson**

Rich shared information about the Vocational improvement Initiative. The effort to improve vocational services was launched because of recognition by internal and external stakeholders that vocational services can be problematic. The following areas of concern have been identified:

- Vocational referrals that do not result in a usable outcome.
- Delays in obtaining needed services.
- Lack of understanding about the purpose of vocational services.

The initiative will focus on process improvements, both internal to the State Fund, and in the vocational services arena. The following objectives have been identified:

- Develop and share a clear message and a clear set of expectations around vocational services.

- Improve the recruitment and retention of agency vocational staff.
- Provide timely appropriate services to quickly and safely return workers to work.
- Reduce delays in obtaining vocational services.
- Provide eligible workers with effective plan development assistance that results in an approved plan.
- Ensure approved plans are completed successfully.
- Improve the vocational purchasing process.

A cross-functional core team of L&I staff have been assembled to address these issues. The staff includes:

- Vickie Kennedy, Project Director
- Rich Wilson, RTW Program Manager
- Sara L. Spiering, Project Lead
- Mark Holm, Claims Unit Supervisor
- Barb Mickelson, Pension Adjudicator
- Keith Klinger, Vocational Services Consultant
- Mardi Sarjent, Vocational Services Consultant
- Mary Crew, Vocational Services Consultant
- Julie Byrd, Claim Manager
- Kristine Davis, Claim Manager
- Cherie Wagaman, Claims Consultant
- Mark Pogue, Insurance Services Tech. Support
- Kendra Hanson, Executive Fellow
- Sigrid Alejandro, Administrative Support

The initiative will also look at larger issues, with the goal of developing prototype programs, and/or legislation that might help increase effectiveness. Ideas under consideration include:

- Identify ways to increase accountability of all parties.
- Explore options for utilizing apprenticeship programs.
- Explore ways to utilize outside resources:
  - Work Source
  - Industry Skills Panels
  - Community colleges and voc tech schools
- Potential “systems” issues:

- Workers who move out of state
- Performance measure (CACO)
- Adequacy of statutory funds available for retraining
- Others to be determined

Rich noted that the VTSG will be an important source of feedback for ideas generated by the core team. In addition, the department is exploring other ways to communicate initiative ideas with vocational providers, including use of the vocational web site.

### **Apprenticeship Program – Patrick Woods**

Patrick Woods, Assistant Director, Specialty Compliance gave a presentation on the Washington State Apprenticeship Program. He provided information packets and addressed the following topics:

- Pre-apprenticeship considerations (i.e. physical demands, time frames, math skills, availability, labor market, etc)
- How apprenticeships consists of 2,000 to 10, 000 hours of on-the-job training and typically 144 hours of classroom training.
- Comparisons of formal or technical training expenses to costs of apprenticeship programs.
- Key components for why apprenticeship is so successful include: Employer commitment by investing in the apprenticeship process of training and paying apprentices graduated wage increases as they progress through the system (minimum wage and up); Employee commitment as they receive graduated pay increases over time and attend evening classes of over 144 hours per year; Training Institution commitment as apprenticeship classes are usually much more expensive to provide due the learning lab requirements (i.e. dispensing optician and electrical tech).
- Steps to creating an apprenticeship program.
- Median Wage of a graduated apprentice with 93% employment is \$45,700 per years (Workforce Board);

It is Patrick's hope that future collaboration of the vocational rehabilitation community with the Washington State Apprenticeship Program can help develop plant programs (within a large, single employer) for custom situations.

## **VTSG Led item – Microfiche Review**

VTSG members requested a preview of the 2005 Fall conference presentation on the topic of microfiche review.

- It was acknowledged that a review of the claim file via microfiche can be an essential component of providing vocational services. However, the documentation (or lack thereof) of microfiche reviews has been a concern.
- It was clarified L&I was not considering any fee caps for billing of microfiche review.
- Factors to consider when reviewing billing for microfiche review were presented:
  - Case complexity
  - Whether the microfiche has previously been reviewed for the current referral or a previous referral.
  - Whether documentation from the microfiche review contributes to the completion of the vocational referral.
  - Whether the documentation from the microfiche review provides a concise and meaningful analysis of relevant information.
  - Level of case notes/documentation of review.
  - WAC 296-19A-350(9) states: Describe each service sufficiently to allow the referral source to verify the purpose, level, type, and outcome of each services provided and substantiate the charges billed for them.
- Examples of inadequate documentation related to microfiche reviews were presented
  - Documenting referral information previously obtained and reviewed at the time of the referral was received.
  - Transcribing word for word every Attending Physician chart notes and other medical documents, when a summary of information is sufficient.
  - Documenting information related to claim management, which is not relevant to vocational services being provided, i.e. documenting time loss payments each month.

## **Audience Comments**

Julie Maxwell commented on outcome statistics that Rich Wilson presented. She suggested that the 50 % completion rate might be an acceptable number given the various constraints.

***THE NEXT VTSG MEETING WILL BE January 23, 2006 IN TUMWATER***